



## **Senate Press Office**

201 Paul D. Coverdell Legislative Office Building  
18 Capitol Square  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
404.656.0028 or outside the Atlanta area 800.282.5803

### **COLUMN**

For Immediate Release:  
August 29, 2008

### **COLUMN**

For Information Contact:  
Raegan Weber, Director  
404.656.0028

## **Home Energy Relief – Just One Portion of a Comprehensive Energy Strategy**

By State Sen. Chip Pearson



We are finally feeling some relief during the energy crisis with the decline of gas prices. Although this relief is welcomed, we should not ease the pressure on our national leaders to develop a long-term, comprehensive energy strategy. State Senator Ross Tolleson (R-Perry), with the support of many members of the Georgia General Assembly and Georgia leadership, is leading an effort throughout the southeast to accomplish long-term, sustainable energy independence. Although Georgia currently has some of the lowest energy costs in the nation, we must still explore every possible resource available to help reduce the burden of energy costs on Georgia citizens, while not over-regulating industry providers.

Citizens need incentives and assistance to help with home energy costs. The average cost of natural gas for residential consumers of Atlanta Gas Light Company's distribution system has increased by \$550 since September 2003. Georgia has provided a few solutions such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), but more could be done. The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) has disbursed over \$21 million to the LIHEAP, which assists low-income customers in paying natural gas bills. The PSC voted to increase funding by \$6

million for this winter to a total funding of \$27 million. More should be done to assist all Georgians in meeting their monthly bill obligations where the state is authorized to do so.

Georgia's consumers possess the best and most effective control over the impact of high home heating prices during cold winters. Consumers have the ability to request and should review educational materials regarding assistance programs, billing options, and energy efficiency and conservation programs. Additionally, consumers should be afforded with the opportunity to negotiate per thermo rates and billing options at any time while under contract.

What can Georgians do today that will help their home energy costs? Some effective measures to combat high heating bills include:

- Hanging lined draperies over windows;
- Using draft blockers along windows and doors;
- Allowing sunlight in during daylight hours to provide natural heating;
- Having service performed on furnaces to ensure optimal performance;
- Lowering the hot water heater thermostat setting to 120 degrees;
- Installation of programmable thermostats;
- Weathering all the windows and doors in the home.

Long-term goals regarding home heating should reflect the need for diversification and expansion of the state and nation's energy capacity and infrastructure. The short-term goals should ensure that Georgia's consumers are provided with the most accurate information and plentiful options from home heating providers so that each household may prepare, weatherize, and budget for the challenge that each winter may bring.

###

*Please feel free to contact Sen. Chip Pearson at his office in Atlanta at 404.656.9221 or by email at [chip.pearson@senate.ga.gov](mailto:chip.pearson@senate.ga.gov).*